



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

May 19, 1970

Dr. Charles J. Hitch
President
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Dr. Hitch,

Your letter of May 13 concerning the conferral by the Regents of the University of California of an honorary degree should have been a source of unmixed gratification. Indeed, I must acknowledge my thanks to you and for the efforts and good opinions of my academic colleagues.

I could not, however, accept such an award from the Board of Regents without taking note of my profound disquiet over many of its recent actions that constitute a dangerous intrusion of political considerations into academic functions. I have in mind especially the action of the Board in overruling a faculty recommendation for an honorary degree to Mayor Lindsay; and its more recent action in overriding your own authority with respect to a faculty appointment.

It is not my wish, however, to contribute further to the politicization of academic life by a public response in kind on my own part. Furthermore, I realize that these issues have many more complexities than I could properly deal with in any brief unilateral statement. An outsider also has a grave responsibility not to add further provocations to an already factious situation.

The best solution to my personal problem, still consistent, I believe, with the best interests of the University, is to request that the Regents withdraw or defer the proposed award. It is my intention to keep this matter as private as it is in my power to do, and I passionately look forward to the time when an honor of this kind can be a subject of joy without ambiguity.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

cc: Chancellor Lee
JL/rr

for UC/SF
June 8, 1970